

CHRISTIANITY and CRISIS

A Christian Journal of Opinion

Festus in a Fix

The eternal blessedness of the individual is decided in time through the relationship to something historical, which is furthermore of such a character as to include in its composition that which in its essence cannot become historical, and must therefore become such by virtue of the Absurd.

—Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*

"There is a man here," he [Festus] said, "who was left in prison by Felix, and when I was at Jerusalem the Jewish high priests and elders presented their case against him, and asked for his conviction. I told them that it was not the Roman custom to give anybody up until the accused met his accusers face to face and had a chance to defend himself against their accusations. So they came back here with me and the next day without losing any time I took my seat upon the bench and ordered the man [Paul] brought in. But when his accusers got up, they did not charge him with any such crimes as I had expected. Their differences with him were about their own religion and about a certain Jesus who had died but who Paul said was alive. I was at a loss as to how to investigate such matters..."

Acts 25:15-20 (Goodspeed)

There is wonderful color, immediacy, and even a certain humor in this account in the book of the Acts. Good old Festus! We can reconstruct in our imagination about the kind of a fellow who proposes to do his duty, remind the people that he is doing it as a Roman and send up a clear re-

port to his superior. A good Roman in other ways too—clear, factual, consecutive, proud of his rational Roman legacy. Get the facts, know the law, apply the law, get justice done with no nonsense. And call things by their right name.

But Festus was a man upset, too. For when he heard the nature of the accusations against Paul he knew he was in for a bad time. Here was no clean-cut situation of the sort that Roman law could make sense of. The substance of the public tumult that had got Paul placed in protective custody by the police was "...about a certain Jesus who had died but who Paul said was alive."

That might possibly make sense in the backwaters of the odd Jewish culture whose former territory the Romans were now governing. This kind of statement might possibly be an "intelligible proposition" in the context of the tradition which had generated such bizarre ideas about history as to preserve and spin the meaning of its own history around the stories of Exodus and Sinai. A nation that had produced the madness of Isaiah's songs of deliverance and the late remembered frenzy of the Macabee family did not lend itself to easy calculation.

So Festus, with a flat, let-us-Romans-have-no-nonsense summary of the whole business simply says to his royal superior, "I was at a loss as to how to investigate such matters!"

We still are! Facts are facts. So we try to establish *this* fact by treating it like all common facts. The New Testament, to be sure, doesn't do that. That document of the resurrection-community sends up all kinds of signals that in this instance fact and faith are correlated in a unique way. But

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we are still tempted to improve on that holy kind of care about facts. And the more massive the improvement the more we applaud the effort, forgetting that even Our Lord remarked with some asperity, "...neither will they believe if one rose from the dead." And forgetting, too, that a speculatively successful effort to establish the fact of the resurrection in a continuity with other facts, and by the same methods, would both belie the character of faith and make it—unnecessary.

There is no Christian faith without the victory of God in Jesus Christ. But the faith that is based upon the establishment of that event by ways strange to what the Man in the event promised it would accomplish and make available is not Christian faith.

Festus had at least the sensitivity to acknowledge and the candor to admit that he was stumped. We are historically not as stumped as he was or for quite the same reasons. We can see more clearly what kind of a "relationship to something historical" is required. But our kind of clarity focuses upon and intensifies the decision of faith; it doesn't eliminate it or make it simpler.

Therefore the traditional prayer of the Church on Easter Day includes the petition: "...we humbly beseech thee that by *thy special grace* preventing us...."

J. S.

A RICH NATION IN A POOR WORLD

A RECENT CONFERENCE in Washington was devoted to two of the President's current policies: extension of reciprocal trade agreements and the foreign aid program which provides nearly \$4 billion (out of our budget of \$70 billion) for economic and military assistance to the technically backward nations.

The conference was completely bipartisan: President Eisenhower and ex-President Truman, vice-president Nixon and Adlai Stevenson all made addresses. In short, the leadership of both parties is fully aware of the importance of these two measures. Yet the bills face rough seas in Congress. This curious fact sheds a vivid light on the morality of nations and the moral problem of this rich nation in particular.

It will be remembered that from Thomas Jefferson to Woodrow Wilson, the favorite theory of lib-

eralism was that the immorality of nations was due to evil rulers and that the common people were essentially virtuous. The theory did not consider that the common people might be both virtuous and dumb. The real problem in the foreign policy of democratic nations is whether the people will support measures which the leaders know to be necessary, but which seem very remote from the concerns of the average citizen. These two bills are a case in point.

The reciprocal trade treaty, for which the President asks a five year extension, is designed to erode gradually the high tariff walls which were originally designed to protect "infant industries" and hasten the industrialization of the young American nation. But we have since become the greatest complex of industrial power in the world. With six per cent of the world's population we produce 40 per cent of the world's industrial goods and services. The problem of the poorer nations is to secure the dollars they need to trade with us. High tariff walls make this difficult.

In the case of Japan, whom we have cut off from her natural Chinese market, the tendency of American industries to ask for protection whenever Japanese goods invade our markets may well drive her into the arms of the enemy. Even a president as devoted to reciprocity as Eisenhower was pressed to raise tariffs on British bicycles and Swiss watches when the competitive pressure pinched American industries. A wave of anti-Americanism followed in Europe.

The reason for these difficulties is obvious. Local interests on the part of both labor and capital oppose reciprocal trade, though it is absolutely essential for the health of the nation and for preserving some decent mutuality between a wealthy nation and a poor world. Therefore it is necessary to enlist the conscience and the self-interest of the nation as a whole in order to prevent local interests from confusing American strategy.

It is significant that Secretary of Commerce Weeks, hitherto an old-fashioned New England protectionist, has been championing the reciprocal trade agreement and insisting that his policy was prompted by national interest rather than morals. Our prosperity does depend to a considerable degree on export trade. High tariff walls prevent other nations from earning the dollars to buy from us.

One of our difficulties is the fact that we have

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such a comparatively self-sufficient economy that we do not have the same motives that Britain had for free trade when it was her destiny to manage Europe as we must now manage the political equilibrium of the world. We must make up in insight what we lack in economic motivation.

Unfortunately the industrialization of the South has turned southern Democrats (hitherto internationalists and free traders because they were cotton exporters) into a new breed of isolationists, protectionists, nationalists. On this issue, Senators Richard Russell and Herman Talmadge of Georgia both speak the same language—quite different from that of the late Senator Walter George.

The foreign aid bill is as necessary for our relations to the building nations of Asia and Africa as trade reciprocity is to our relations with European nations. The situation has changed radically since we embarked on mutual assistance for the underdeveloped nations in President Truman's Point Four program. At that time the idea was to prevent revolution in poverty-stricken areas. Now we are competing with the Russians who are not preaching revolution but are buying up Asian and Middle Eastern nations. Their loan to Syria at two-and-a-half per cent interest is a symbol of their rigorous competition.

If we didn't have the competitive motive, it is doubtful whether the nation would support foreign aid at all. Even with the competition, the rivalry over earth satellites seems more dramatic and therefore more popular with the public. Hence the leaders must exert themselves to "sell" the public this "bill of goods."

Perhaps it ought to be mentioned that only a little less than \$1 billion is apportioned for non-military aid. When one of the bureaucrats in charge of the program was asked whether this was enough, he answered equivocally. The fact is that the Administration put in just enough to make the bill palatable to a reluctant Congress during a period of economic depression in an election year. Everyone will ask why that money could not be used to prime the pump for the home market.

These considerations prove how difficult it is for a wealthy nation to realize its position in a poor world and to overcome the perils to community of the disparities of wealth and poverty in which we live. In short, these two measures deserve more than ordinary support from internationally-minded citizens. Intelligent imagination must resist the natural instincts of a nation. Such instincts would betray us into foolish policies.

R. N.

THE AEC ADMITS AN ERROR

THE ATOMIC Energy Commission has conceded that it made a mistake last summer when it reported the underground explosion in Nevada could be detected no further than 250 miles away. According to James Reston's report in *The New York Times*, the commission now admits that the explosion was detected 2,000 miles away in Alaska.

This raises once again a very serious question concerning the relation to the public of the AEC and its scientists. It has important bearing on foreign policy decisions because it was on the assumption that such explosions could not be detected at distances of more than 250 miles that our government refused an offer by the Soviet Union to allow detection instruments to be set up on Russian territory. Mr. Reston says that, only two weeks ago, Dr. Edward Teller had assured reporters that "disarmament is a lost cause" because of the difficulty of detecting such explosions at a distance.

This episode illustrates the uncertainty that attends nuclear tests; it reminds one of the miscalculations about the effect of the hydrogen test which injured the Japanese fishermen. It also shows what happens when scientists of great reputation use their authority as scientists to defend policy.

The veil of secrecy which surrounds the activities of the AEC intensifies the problem. The ordinary citizen should reserve judgment when he reads the dogmatic statements of the official scientists. When independent scientists challenge the official ones, he should take them seriously.

The AEC is engaged in activities which can have terrible consequences. Its secrecy and its dogmatism about these activities may soon exhaust the patience of the American people. There is no longer an independent voice, like that of Thomas E. Murray, on the commission to give a measure of confidence that opinions contrary to the official line will be heard. We hope that this powerful body will soon have new leadership and that its power may be curbed.

J. C. B.

In Our Next Issue

M. M. THOMAS writes on India's search for a religious basis for responsible politics:

"Where men seek in the state the Church Militant, an instrument of salvation, they turn out in the end as commissars or, in reaction, withdraw as yogis."

RICHARD NIEBUHR'S article, announced for this issue, will appear later in the spring.

Evangelical Academies in America?

PETER L. BERGER

THERE HAS BEEN a rising interest in this country in the Evangelical Academies of Germany. An increasing number of people have felt that the academies are based on a concept which is relevant far beyond the special case of the German churches. Isolated experiments, like the Parishfield project of the Episcopal Church, have attempted to apply a similar concept to the American situation. At its 1956 convention the United Lutheran Church formally authorized a number of pilot projects with the idea that an academy might become an integral part of the denomination's program. An important place was given to the academies in the study of religion in Germany undertaken by the New School for Social Research in 1953-55. There has been much discussion, in and out of the National Council of Churches, of coordinating this interest in an ongoing movement.

The German academies conceive of themselves as offering a place for dialogue between the church and world. Here is a place where men can discuss their problems in complete openness. The church is to offer this as a service to the world, without hindthoughts as to its own self-interest in the matter. To put it more bluntly, this is not to be a new way of catching mice.

Since this dialogue takes place between "insiders" and "outsiders," the primary emphasis cannot be on the training of the church's own laymen. But this may be, and in fact is, a secondary concern of the academies: rousing the "insiders" to their Christian responsibility in the vocational world. This second task lies behind the statement, made recently at an academy in East Germany, that what is involved ultimately is nothing less than the conversion of the church.

The way in which German academies seek to realize this aim is by discussion between the most varied groups of the society. From fall to early summer one conference after another meets to discuss specific problems. Most of the conferences are geared to certain occupational groups and deal with the issues that actually concern them. There is no attempt by the staff of the academies to dictate either the problematic or the solutions, if any, that the conferences may work out. The programs are usually drawn up by staff members meeting to-

gether with representatives of the occupational group in question. Occasionally speakers are invited to lecture on topics connected with the problems to be discussed, but the emphasis throughout is on discussion, dialogue, human contact between the participants of the conference. Intentionally, much free time is left open to allow for more intimate, personal exchanges of views.

Sitting in for several weeks in succession in the meeting hall of, say, the Bad Boll Academy is very much like observing a panorama of German society. One group after another comes through this room with its own peculiar problems and questions: farmers, workers, students, businessmen, government officials, teachers, soldiers, housewives and many more. All are treated with the same courtesy. The problems of all are treated with equal seriousness, whether it is farmers discussing the moral issues of planned land reforms, or industrialists and labor leaders talking together about situations of conflict between them, or housewives talking about their changing role in the home.

A National Institution

I would like to focus on the problems involved in a possible academy movement in this country. There are two aspects to be considered: the possibility of an academy set up as a public institution on a national or regional level and the implications of the academy concept on the level of the local congregation or parish.

How could the academy, as an institution open to all, be realized in the United States? There are a number of facts about American Protestantism that would make impossible a direct translation of the German concept. The German academies were founded in 1945 by men primarily motivated by the complete isolation of the church from the larger society which was recognized during the Nazi period and which, in their opinion, had been a major factor in bringing about the moral catastrophe of Nazism. The underlying fact, therefore, was a profound split between church and world.

Such a split does not exist in America. Instead, there is a church safely embedded in the social structure and a world permeated with a vague religiosity whose relationship with Christianity is a matter of opinion. In other words, there is a high-

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ly secularized Christian church and a pseudo-Christian society.

There is another fundamental sociological difference. In Germany the church was alienated from the world in its character of legally established "folk church." After 1945 it could seek to bridge this gulf again, speaking to the world as *the* church (the "free churches" in Germany are too small in numbers to seriously endanger this claim). In America there is no denomination that could speak as *the* church. And yet the academy concept of dialogue cannot be realized unless society can be addressed, and listened to, as a whole.

These sociological facts have important implications for an American academy functioning as a public institution. From the first, two contradictory conclusions might be drawn. One would be that the major task of the academy should be to concentrate on the church's lay membership, training them in Christian vocational responsibility and hoping that in this way the larger society would eventually be affected. The other conclusion would be that, even more than was the case in Germany, the academy must represent a joint search for answers by all concerned individuals whatever their formal relationship to the organized denominations.

This contradiction resolves itself if we make a distinction between the academy as a public institution and as a parish movement. The first conclusion, if applied to the academy as a public institution, would inevitably lead to a narrow parochialism. Instead of being a dialogue between church and world, the academy would become a monologue within the church. An academy serving as a public forum for the discussion of the ethical problems of our society would certainly present itself as a Christian institution. It would be based on a Christian concern and seek Christian answers. However, by its very concept, it would have to be characterized by complete openness. It is on the parish level that an academy movement intended to rouse the "insiders" from their winter slumber could be developed.

An Ecumenical Base

The implications of both our secularism and our denominationalism lead to a clear conclusion: an American academy can only be realized on the basis of ecumenicity. No one denomination can create a forum that can hope to be heard throughout the society, even on a regional level. No one denomination can attract concerned in-

dividuals by a simple appeal to their responsibilities as Christians and as citizens, without raising serious questions of denominational rivalries and parochialisms.

There is another reason why ecumenicity is paramount. Dr. Eberhard Mueller, the director of the Bad Boll Academy, has said that the dialogue must involve "the kings of this world," the leaders of industry, labor, government, education and other public concern. The German academies owe much of their effectiveness to the fact that they have, indeed, been able to draw these "kings" into their dialogue. No denominational institution here could do this.

Not only must the academy be separated from denominational interests, but also from any egotism on the part of the church. It cannot be an aspect of evangelism, except in the broadest definition of the term as being the bringing to bear of the Christian message on the world. It cannot seek to add to the membership of the church. If it does, it will not be able to fulfill its task as an open forum. Most people sense only too well when they are being made "to sing for their supper."

The academy is to be understood as a service of the church to the world. This means freedom from any "tactical" thinking in terms of church interests, church membership, church politics. Such freedom would be well-nigh impossible within any denominational structure. The institutional interests of various denominational agencies and mission boards would inevitably introduce the "tactical" considerations. This is why, if at all possible, an academy here would be best realized on neutral ground, under the sponsorship of the National Council of Churches, or perhaps even more adequately by an independent institution such as a theological school or one created specially for this purpose. It is not overly optimistic to think that such an institution might find sympathetic listeners in the great American foundations when the question of financing arose.

In the Local Parish

It is on the level of the local congregation that an academy might have its greatest significance for the secularized church itself. It is here that there would be ample area for denominational activity projects. Here the academy would not be a public institution, with buildings and staff and an ongoing program of conferences, but a movement within the local congregation. Here, of course, the

emphasis would be laymen's training on the Christian significance of vocational roles.

This possibility must also be seen against the background of an underlying sociological fact: the relationship of American Protestantism to the stratification of our society. It is a commonplace by now that denominations here, of course with the regional differences, may be ranked according to class prestige. It is not difficult for anyone to make an intelligent guess about the occupations of a group of unknown Episcopalians on the one hand, and of a group of equally unknown members of a Pentecostal church on the other.

This *caste* consciousness in the racial area is but an extension of its more general *class* character. There are probably few scandals in our church life that measure up to this one: that, in cold fact, religion in American society can be described sociologically as a function of class.

There have been many attempts to break down these class barriers. The East Harlem Protestant Parish has been one of the most dramatic. An academy movement on the local level would be a highly promising breakthrough for one reason: because it would deal directly, under the concept of Christian vocation, with what lies at the heart of the class system—men's occupations and their resulting position in society.

Certainly there is no place for class-bound differentiations in any theological conception of the church. Ideally, the church, also in its local congregations, should include all Christians regardless of their station in life. The natural processes of human society make this ideal hard of realization, especially in a society where the division of labor has reached such extreme forms as in America today. This insight, however, need not lead to passive acceptance of the fact that many Protestant men's organizations are virtually indistinguishable from their counterparts in Kiwanis or Rotary, or that the same women will encounter each other in their church groups, their country clubs and perhaps the local AAUW.

An academy movement on the local level might make conscious these social facts that today are largely taken for granted and, by making them conscious, place them under questioning and judgment in the light of the Christian message. By explicitly appealing to specific vocational groups it might go far in meeting the natural social processes, but do so without capitulation to them.

It is not fantastic to say that a successful academy

in a local congregation might bring closer the ideal of church life that many have felt to be adequate for our society: a congregation uniting in its liturgical life and in its overall community men from all walks of life, but providing separate groupings for men in accordance with their vocational responsibilities. In this way, our churches would no longer separate the altar of the businessman from the altar of his elevator operator, but they would also recognize the natural differences in interests and social needs of the two.

The academy movement may thus lead to a revival within Protestantism (and, let it be added hastily, without the romantic medievalism this idea has frequently involved in the Roman Catholic orbit) of the Christian guild concept. All men are united in the church's preaching and worship. In the specifically occupational groupings of the church, the guilds, the differing responsibilities of varied vocations may find their recognition. Especially in our American situation the potential significance of this, in terms of a profound renewal of the church, can hardly be overemphasized.

The "Listening Church"

In its basic approach to the world the academy concept involves much more than a renewed awareness of the Christian responsibility of vocation. It represents an attitude towards the world that is new in the history of the church. It might be described as the attitude of *ecclesia audiens*—the church not militant, not preaching, but *listening* with all its heart to the sufferings and problems of the world. There is in this attitude a conscious surrender of all authority, a taking seriously of the world on its own terms and on its own level.

Nor is there deliberate play-acting in this. The church, in truth, does not possess the answers to the problems that plague our society. But Christians may jointly seek for those answers with other men of good will. In a world where hardly anybody listens anymore, this attitude of the *ecclesia audiens* is in itself witness to the love of God for all men. In this attitude the *ecclesia audiens* may become that form of the church which meets the needs of an age that, in the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, has "come of age." Naturally this new attitude does not imply an abandonment of the preaching role of the church, nor of the timeless authority of the gospel, but it will be in our particular time a renewal of divine love acting through living human beings.

CORRESPONDENCE

The Parish and Delinquency: East Harlem

TO THE EDITORS: I would like to join in the discussion of juvenile delinquency begun by Archie Hargraves in your Jan. 6 issue and continued by Fr. Kilmer Myers in your March 17 issue.

The church cannot look to the preservation and maintenance of its own life if it is to be an instrument of Christian witness among delinquent youth in American cities. Clergy and laymen must look outward at the streets and people around the church asking not, "How can we relate these people to our church?" but rather, "How can we relate ourselves and Christ's gospel to this place and to these people?"

The church cannot be satisfied to put up an "Everybody Welcome" sign and be happy if a few Negro or Puerto Rican children find their way into the Sunday School. One church school teacher said to me: "We have no prejudice in our Sunday school. We have six Negro children from the neighborhood in our membership. They are the cleanest, sweetest, most well-behaved children you could hope to meet." The church must look outside its doors at those who appear to be dirty, disruptive and unattractive and recognize them to be the very ones for whom the church exists. No Sunday School or youth fellowship program, no group work or case-work program can substitute for a community of Christians who are willing to expose themselves and their church by living with and loving the most troubled youth of a parish.

In a community or city where thousands upon thousands of young people do not know a wholesome home life, do not enjoy the kinds of material things they see in ads and movies, do not experience an ordered community life, it is irrelevant for a church to devise a program based on the aim of improving the moral standards of young people. In East Harlem, for instance, forces stronger than any individual or institution have powerful hold on children growing up in a context of life devoid of what the church has thought of as normative, "respectable" morality. Think of:

A girl, who wasn't wanted by her mother in the first place, who has seen her mother living with several men, who has never known her father, and who has no resources or reason for resisting the offer of affection which leaves her carrying a child who will know even less of the pattern of what we call Christian family life.

A boy, whose father is a drunkard and thief and whose mother is a prostitute, and who finds recognition at home from what he can steal. A 17-year-old girl, whose mother left "for a week or so" with a boy friend, is left with three small children to care for and goes out of her mind. A boy, whose father is a hopeless TB case and whose mother is mentally unstable, tries to forget his expulsion from school for bad behavior by taking heroin.

Christ was mocked for making merry and for

breaking bread with sinners. The Body of Christ, his church, must know, accept and share in the life of young people who drink, use narcotics, steal, have out-of-wedlock sex experience, dance the "fish" and the "grind," carry guns and knives, are truant or have quit school, and who do not hold jobs. Their alienation from the church, from society, from all men is great. They desperately crave love and affection and acceptance even though they are often not able to accept it when it is offered. They need to have it offered again and again and again.

The church is given eyes of faith which see Christ victorious and which see, too, the power of the evil one who holds in bondage these children of God. The church should be, could be—is called to be—that fellowship of redemption which proclaims the love poured out in fullness for sinners otherwise lost. Clergy and laity alike confess a faith which empowers them to walk into the midst of the worst the world has to offer knowing that God has created the world and all in it for himself, that he calls creation to himself, and is redeeming it unto himself. In the knowledge and faith in what our God has done and is doing, the church can offer itself again and again, regardless of how the world receives its offering.

The church does not need to be concerned about its reputation in having consort with the disinherited and disreputable. Nor does it have to separate itself from them by calling them recipients of charity. The church calls them, by the love shown to them, to love Him who first loved them.

The church does not exist to keep its membership pure from such as are called juvenile delinquents, nor does it exist to keep its property in first-rate condition. The church is the Body of Christ set in the middle of the world to give its life away that men might know the good news of a God who loves them.

One church stopped calling on youth in a new low-income public housing project after some of the young people came to a youth group meeting in response to visits from the church staff. In a scuffle, a church chandelier was damaged and a wall was marred. "We can't have youth who don't know how to behave without breaking up our nice group," one of the leaders said. This church with its upholstered furniture, grand pianos, and stained glass windows might yet discover that God would bless it in its true vocation if it were to make the youth of its parish welcome there, even though it might mean names scratched on its spotless walls and broken panes in the stained glass. Youth who never saw love in action have to test it for a long time before they believe it.

Christians are called to follow Christ as servants to their neighbors. Christ also tells us that we meet him and are blessed in the giving of ourselves to one in need. A ministry to delinquent and pre-delinquent youth in today's cities is a call to cross-bearing—which is not a pretty nor a comfortable business. Sacrificial giving of money alone cannot do the job. This is a work that demands lives.

To serve delinquent youth may mean the sacrifice of an orderly congregational life. A gang shooting in the church and knives in the Sunday School cannot be handled in the same way that a church budget is drawn up or a series of speakers is planned. It may mean some sacrifice of beauty and order in worship—teenagers get restless during the prayers and the sermons, since they are not sure whether they want to be in or out. It may mean the sacrifice of the well-planned and smooth functioning qualities of a youth fellowship program.

For some clergy and leaders, it will mean the sacrifice of some benefits for their own children and the sacrifice of some of the amenities of family life. Crises do not come on schedule!

Is the church called to such sacrifice in the name of a Father who gave his only Son to die on a cross that the world might be saved?

Each church must work this out for itself. Mr. Hargraves recruits church members as foster parents. Fr. Myers lives with teenagers on a boat. The East Harlem Protestant Parish has street clubs and canteens. Is there not a way that each church can find a blessing in its ministry to troubled teenagers?

The Rev. GEORGE TODD
East Harlem Protestant Parish
New York, N.Y.

From the North: Shared Guilt

TO THE EDITORS: Your symposium on the southern churches and race (March 3 issue) was very substantial. Northern churchmen share the same condemnation these men feel so deeply. Arising as it did "out of the perspective of close personal involvement" it had nothing of the vaporousness often associated with the academic. You might use this approach with great effect in the future.

As Christians we are not only the "beat" but also the "funkt" generation. The anonymity of the article by the Episcopal priest made me very uncomfortable. The first chapter of Romans is ringing in my ears.

On the other hand the perceptiveness of Mr. Smith of our spiritual malaise, hidden behind the smoke screen of quantity, is very relevant. Indeed, we are only half-convinced Christians. We do fol-

low other gods than the Father, and our path is dim, and when preaching we are the most uncomfortable.

The Rev. DUDLEY BENNETT
Greenville, Michigan

In order to get the most straightforward statements possible without jeopardizing their continuing work, we requested the writers of the articles to freely avail themselves of either pseudonyms or anonymity.

THE EDITORS

Satire or Ridicule?

TO THE EDITORS: Normally the sound orientation of your journal with regard to the verities of the gospel and the realities of our human situation makes it one of my most eagerly anticipated pieces of reading. But sometimes you do set my teeth on edge...

The line is a fine one between satire, which is written with a loving understanding of human frailty and which opens it up hopefully and amusingly, ... and ridicule, which makes fun of people with a slightly shrill and bitter note.

Your Hereticus too often goes over into the latter stage. He's not quite sure of himself yet, to write the kind of things he does. And the recent bit on "Ecclesiastical Birdwatching" (Feb. 3 issue) ... is another sample of this caustic cruelty which reveals more about the viewer than the viewed. It is just a little too clever and brittle to evoke the sympathetic and understanding laughter which, I suspect, it was meant to evoke.

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